

# Unmasking the Lived Experiences of Hotel Workers on the Impact of Covid-19

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.801097>

Received: 31 December 2023; Revised: 09 January 2024; Accepted: 12 January 2024; Published: 07 February 2024

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of hotel employees in Zamboanga City during the COVID-19 pandemic. The phenomenological approach was used to analyze the lived experiences of hotel workers, focusing on the human aspect of the crisis. The study highlights themes such as temporary accommodation schemes, exceptional hospitality services, financial challenges of hotel workers, travel restrictions and uncertainties, emotional struggles experienced by hotel workers, provision of stopgap support, and skeletal workforce establishment. Coping strategies include adhering to health protocols, ensuring healthcare, receiving charitable assistance, and receiving motivation from loved ones. The study also highlights personal growth, positive values, and the value of government and family support during the pandemic. The pandemic has prompted businesses to implement business continuity plans, with hotels reducing staff to maintain operations and protect workers' health and safety. Family remains a motivator, with many employees relying on income to cover essential expenses. Financial responsibilities and a sense of duty to their families also motivate employees to continue working. The research paper suggests future studies should consider post-pandemic scenarios and explore topics like stress, anxiety, burnout, and coping mechanisms. Hotel management should implement better health and safety practices, create a secure working environment, support remote work policies, and communicate their commitment to employee safety.

**Keywords:** business management, COVID-19, family, hotel industry, Zamboanga City, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

The temporary closure of several hotels executed tactics to flatten the COVID-19 curve, such as public lock downs, social distancing, stay-at-home orders, travel restrictions, and mobility limitations, which significantly reduced the demand for the industry (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). Because of mobility restrictions and lock downs during the COVID-19 pandemic, workplace interactions were limited or completely prevented (McCartney et al., 2022).

The COVID-19 outbreak's widespread concern increased stress, melancholy, and irritation, especially among those in the hospitality industry (Aguiar-Quintana et al., 2021). Jung et al. (2021) asserted that hotels faced an employment shock in terms of a significantly reduced number of employees, and a very high rise in the number of employees being on temporary leave. Insecurities over their work had a negative impact on job engagement, according to Jung et al. (2021). Similarly, in research conducted by Wong et al. (2021), job satisfaction and organizational commitment among hotel staff during the COVID-19 crisis had a substantial impact on productivity at work, perceived well-being, and social behavior, but not on intentions to leave. Additionally, certain workers were required to work from home for a predetermined number of days each

month; some of these workers had contracted the COVID-19 virus themselves, whereas others had family members who had been infected (Biancolella, 2022). According to the study, 45% of hospitality workers who have stayed in their jobs express worse job satisfaction now than they had before the pandemic (Peralta, 2021).

The Coronavirus has had a direct impact on members of the hospitality industry, including hotel employees, restaurant hostesses, hosts, bartenders, and waiters (Murray 202). Due to this, it was observed that workplace stress can lead to negative attitudes and behaviors among hotel employees and a detrimental impact on hotel businesses. As a result, Hon et al. in their study in 2013 related how work stress hurts the employee's attitude and performance at work, as well as the hotel's overall performance. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the lack of financial resources was the dominant feature in most hotels, which reduced employee salaries (Bajrami et al., 2021).

In India, the hotel business employed 1.43 million people between 2013 and 2017 (Statista, 2020), consequently the COVID-19 lock down had a severe impact on both the hotel industry and the country's overall economic growth. Similarly, the outbreak of the pandemic caused a great deal of stress among hotel staff who served a variety of guests, according to a study conducted in Korea on the Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on employees' work stress, well-being, mental health, organizational citizenship behavior, and employee-customer identification (Yu et al., 2021).

As the pandemic problem lingered until July 2020 in the Philippines, the detrimental impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector in the country was projected to result in an economic hit of more than USD 7 billion (Centeno and Marquez 2020). Furthermore, a study in Boracay on the Coping Mechanism of Hospitality Industry Workers in a Tourist Destination Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic revealed that hospitality workers had all endured mental health, social, and financial challenges.

The impact of COVID-19 on travel and tourism in Zamboanga City was significant. According to a report by Pareno (Phil Star, 2020), to safeguard its citizens from the virus, the city shut its borders to all land, sea, and water travel. The mayor of the City issued Executive Order No. 552-2020 in response to the Inter-Agency Task Force on COVID-19 resolution calling for preventative measures to stop the virus' propagation. According to a related article by Go (Philippine News Agency, 2020), the pandemic had the greatest effect on the city's business community because multiple conferences, seminars, and other events that were scheduled to take place in adjacent hotels had to be canceled. The region's tourism industry suffered a total of PHP 897.5 million because of the nationwide quarantine implemented during the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, Santiago (Philippine News Agency, 2020) reported that the local quarantine that restricted the public's movement had had an impact on accommodations, restaurants, leisure activities, health and wellness facilities, transportation services, ticketing businesses, as well as tour and travel operators. The tourism industry in the city is among the badly hit sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of travelers come to the city for vacation or leisure, according to the tourism office (GMAnews, Diga).

The objective of this phenomenological study was to depict and understand the lived experiences, coping strategies, and insights of hotel staff in Zamboanga City because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, it aimed to discover new insights to share and enlighten hotel owners of Zamboanga City as to how they could help improve their employees' work lives. Even though there is a wide array of research concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the Hospitality industry, there are only a few studies that focus on the adversities faced by hotel employees during covid 19 pandemic. It is in this context, that the researcher was therefore motivated and felt a desire to undertake research in this setting.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative research, particularly the phenomenological approach, to ascertain the lived experiences of hotel workers in Zamboanga City. According to Creswell's definition from 2009, phenomenology is a research approach of inquiry in which the researcher pinpoints the essence of participants' descriptions of human encounters with a phenomenon.

In the writings of Moustakas, (1994) Phenomenology is a research strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants. Phenomenological research is a qualitative research approach that aids in articulating an individual's life experiences. Similarly, Pope and Mays (1995) have mentioned that qualitative is the development of concepts that help us to understand social phenomena in a natural setting, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of the participants.

The researcher chose phenomenology because it is well-suited to studying the hotel employees' lived experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a phenomenological approach is the right choice in analyzing a lived experience (Olick, & Robbins, 1998; Casey, 2009). All the gathered data to be used for analysis, interpretation, and understanding of the phenomena will be emphasized in this study. This approach enabled the researcher to explore the variety and depth of their experiences and offered insightful information that may be used to improve support programs, interventions, and policies for this group of employees. By emphasizing the significance of recognizing and dealing with the lived experiences of hotel employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is focused on the human aspect of a crisis and aids in the development of a more compassion-driven understanding of the challenges faced by hotel workers.

The participants in this study were the hotel employees of the selected hotels in Zamboanga City. Furthermore, the researcher gathered relevant and primary data useful for the conduct of this study. Identifying and choosing scenarios with an array of information allowed researchers to make the best use of their limited resources (Patton, 2002). The participants of this study must be employed as hotel workers in Zamboanga City, Philippines, during the specified research period (from March 2020 to March 2021). Eligible roles may include but are not limited to front desk staff, housekeeping, kitchen staff, and management positions within hotels. A total of (17) seventeen participants voluntarily consented to participate in the study for the In-depth Interview. The researcher sought the assistance of the Human Resource Officer to identify the said participants. Their identities were concealed throughout the conduct of the study and in this paper. They were coded with assigned aliases to ensure the anonymity of the participants. This decorum was an essential research ethics measure to uphold the right to privacy of the research participants.

The researcher used open-ended questions through an in-depth interview to effectively get primary data about the lived experiences of hotel workers on the impact of COVID-19 in Zamboanga City. Moreover, the researcher used note taking and audio recording to avoid overlooking of data. The guide questions were validated by at least three researchers.

The data gathering for the study followed procedures and protocols such as letter of endorsement seeking the approval of the Dean of the College to permit her to conduct the study, after which the study was subjected to the research ethics review by the Research Ethics Committee (REC). After passing the review, the researcher was given a clearance to ensure the study considered the ethical procedures, the researcher then started the data collection. The researcher also wrote a letter addressed to the hotel to ask permission to conduct a face-to-face interview with the identified employees. The researcher followed the National Ethical Guideline of 2017 to collect data face-to-face. The participant's safety and health were given the greatest priority by the researcher. The identified participants received informed consent if they were willing to

participate in the study. This was done by briefing them and informing them of the study's content. Before the participants were subjected to any form of data collection method, they were already briefed and knew what the topic of investigation was and why they were chosen as participants. Next was the conduct of the interview, the researcher utilized the validated interview question with the guide questionnaire. An in-depth interview is a personal interview that is carried out with one respondent at a time. This is purely a conversational method and invites opportunities to get in-depth details from the participant.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face. Before presenting the questions, the researcher made sure that the questions were already formulated to extract the vital data from the participants needed to answer the study's research questions. After all the data was gathered, it was managed and secured by the researcher. Then, the participant's responses were transcribed for the data analysis. The recordings were transcribed verbatim before data analysis could begin. The researcher maintained a folder of "field notes" to complement audiotaped interviews. Field notes allowed the researchers to maintain and comment upon impressions, environmental contexts, behaviors, and nonverbal cues that may not be adequately captured through audio recording; they were typically handwritten in a small notebook while the interview took place. Field notes provided important context for interpreting the audiotaped data and helped remind the researcher of situational factors that could be important during data analysis. The next step is to analyze the data, which will be provided in the following chapters when it has been interpreted.

In analyzing the data, was subjected to phenomenological analysis and employed a combination of established techniques and qualitative research experts. In this section, the researcher utilized thematic analysis. In the writings of Maguire, M & Delahunt, B (2017) thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts like interview transcripts. The purpose of thematic analysis is to recognize themes that are important and interesting and that are useful sources in answering the study or saying something about the problem. Thematic analysis is a common approach for qualitative research as it provides simple inter pretable and brief assimilations of emergent themes and patterns contained in the data for interpretation. Familiarization of data, generation of codes, theme searching, theme review, defining themes, and making a report are among the steps in thematic analysis.

The researcher thoroughly listened and read the transcripts and recordings and engaged in the transcription to be familiarized and gave a deeper understanding of the aspects of the data gathered. Then, the analyst identified the initial codes that delivered significance and interest. It is expected that numerous codes will be generated but will be specified according to their context in the conversation. The next step was the identification of themes. This involved interpretative analysis together with the identified codes. The data were sorted following major themes considering their relationship with the codes, sub-themes, and themes. A thorough review of the identified themes by joining together, filtering, extricating, or discarding the initial themes will be the next step. The results of the analysis were then organized in a manner that can provide merit and validity to the study. According to Creswell (2012), the basis of qualitative research is the wide collection of data from various sources of information. The researcher will comprehend the facts until categories, codes, and themes develop by working naturally from particulars to a more general viewpoint (Polit & Beck, 2009). The researchers emphasized the study's use of coding with this statement.

The paper underwent review by the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC) to assess the ethical considerations that need to be applied in the study. By doing so, the study will be able to adhere to the institution's principles and core values, avoiding ethical conflicts. Preventative actions will be implemented to ensure that research ethical principles and research rights are respected. The study's ethical aspects will be addressed by the following measures. The participants will be properly informed about the study's purpose and assured that their participation in the interview is strictly voluntary; all sources of information used in the study by the researcher will be fully referenced; the in-depth interview

to be conducted will not contain any degrading or discriminatory language that could harm the participants, and all data gathered will be strictly confidential. To comply with the ethical standards set by the UIC-REC the researcher will abide by the ten (10 dimensions of research ethics including social value, informed consent, vulnerability issues, risk-benefit ratio, privacy and confidentiality of information, justice, transparency, qualification of the researcher, adequacy of facilities and community involvement.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participants in this investigation were hotel employees from several recognized hotels in Zamboanga City who were working during the COVID-19 pandemic. To safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of the participants involved in this study, pseudonyms were used throughout the results. The pseudonym was based on the different barangays of the city. Out of the (17) seventeen respondents, (9) nine were males and (8) eight were females.

### Experiences of the Hotel Employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

After analyzing the responses of the hotel employees working during the pandemic, the following themes surfaced: Transient Accommodation Schemes, Exigent Hospitality Services, Financial Challenges Faced by Employees, Travel Uncertainties and Restrictions, Emotional Struggles due to COVID-19, Provision of Stopgap Support, and Establishment of Skeletal Workforce. Table 2 shows the different core ideas that expound on each essential theme. The themes are provided on table 2 below.

**Table 1**  
*The Profile of the Participants*

Name/Code	Sex
Mr. Camino Nuevo/ID11	Male
Mr. San Jose/ID12	Male
Mr. Southway/ID13	Male
Mr. Moret/ID14	Male
Mr. Camins/ID15	Male
Ms. Mindpro/ID16	Female
Ms. Jaldon/ID17	Female
Mr. Nacional/ID18	Male
Ms. Buenavista/ID19	Female
Mr. Luyahan/ID110	Male
Mr. Guiwan/ID111	Male
Mr. Tetuan/ID112	Male
Ms. San Roque/ID113	Female
Ms. Sta. Maria/ID114	Female
Ms. Cabatangan/ID115	Female
Ms. Putik/ID116	Female
Ms. Pasonanca/ID117	Female

*\*ages of the participants were not disclosed during the interview.*

Transient Accommodation Scheme. To adjust to the changed surroundings, lodging companies must prioritize guest health and safety. The degree of safety offered, and the safeguarding of guests' health will remain the most important considerations when choosing a place to stay until the pandemic passes. Health-related factors have always been significant in the tourism industry, particularly for vulnerable groups.

The challenge of providing for stranded individuals during a pandemic is difficult and calls for a concerted effort from numerous stakeholders. The program is implemented with the collaborative efforts of national government agencies and local government units. Under the program, the government targets to assist stranded OF Ws, students, and tourists.

Exigent Hospitality Services. The impacts of the crisis have led to rethinking hospitality business models. To survive during the crisis, hospitality businesses have tried to find innovative solutions and transform their businesses. Hotel rooms/offices during lock downs, the offer of new and adjusted innovative products

and services, digital services, and use of hotels for quarantining. Because of this, it has significantly changed how services are delivered across many different sectors. Businesses and organizations had to quickly adjust to continue providing their services while following safety regulations.

**Table 2**  
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of Hotel Employees on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Transient Accommodation Schemes	Made a commendable decision to call back staff to assist locally stranded individuals (LSIs)
	Extended services to locally stranded individuals to recover income losses
	Designated specific areas to efficiently handle and cater the locally stranded individuals
	Managed and accommodated locally stranded individuals within the limited capacity
	Had to stay in the hotel to assist arrivals of locally stranded individuals
Exigent Hospitality Services	Ensured guests following 14-day quarantine guidelines
	Adjusted working hours to accommodate the arrival of locally stranded individuals
	Compelled to provide food for quarantined guests
	Experienced the burden of carrying heavy luggage of guests
Financial Challenges Faced by Employees	Faced financial hardships including managing personal budgets
	Coped with the challenge of having only one meal a day due to financial constraints
	Incurred financial setbacks due to reduced income
	Received compensation only when on duty
Travel Uncertainties and Restrictions	Experienced a struggle due to financial strain
	Faced numerous challenges in their daily commutes
	Had to walk long distances from their homes to reach the hotel
	Endured challenges such as rain and hot weather during their commutes
	Encountered difficulties passing through checkpoints
Emotional Struggles due to COVID-19	Needed to answer questions during checkpoints
	Experienced stress from dealing with COVID-positive individuals
	Felt scared and their work was affected
	Confronted with concerns extending to their families and loved ones
Provision of stopgap support	Witnessed guests testing positive for COVID-19
	Had to undergo COVID-19 testing including swabs
	Owners managed the well-being of the staff
Establishment of a skeletal workforce	Provided that the needs of the staff, including food
	Briefed staff on changes in hotel operations
	Implemented reduced workdays and duty hours
	Made significant adjustments for the operational needs
	Arranged staff into morning and evening shifts

**Financial Challenges Faced by Employees.** The financial impact has taken a significant toll which contributed to a global economic crisis, which has both exacerbated financial issues in struggling families and introduced newfound financial strain to many others. Many individuals experienced job loss or reduced working hours, leading to a significant drop in income. As a result, it has become even more challenging to manage household budgets. Lock downs and limitations forced many businesses to temporarily cease or cut down operations, which resulted in job losses or lower employee wages. Throughout the COVID-19 epidemic, one of the most frequent financial difficulties that people and households experienced was income loss.

**Travel Uncertainties and Restrictions.** Commuters were left scrambling around the roads scared after abrupt limitations on public transportation. Others must walk long distances in unsafe areas to come to work on time or be home safely with their families. Even for those who continued to go to work, concerns about using public transportation arose due to the risk of virus transmission during the commute. Essential workers who were required to physically go to their workplaces faced concerns like having to pass through several checkpoints. Travel restrictions related to going to work have been a significant challenge for many individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. The availability of transportation greatly affected the movement of workers which gave difficulty to the employees.

**Emotional struggles due to COVID-19.** The uncertainty surrounding coronavirus is the hardest thing to handle. Many are faced with several stressful circumstances related to the pandemic such as an increased risk of being infected and potentially transmitting the disease. The pandemic is causing a heavy burden in terms of increased work, organizational changes, risk exposure, and social stigma. Being COVID-positive

can be mentally challenging. Try to maintain a positive mindset so as not to dwell on the adverse effects of the disease on your mental and emotional health. An individual’s mental health and psychological functioning may be significantly harmed by stressful life events like pandemics.

Provision of Stopgap Support. Many companies have made major shifts to address employee well-being. These include flexible work arrangements and improving the quality of the work environment. Even in the most uncertain times, the role of a manager remains the same: to support the team members. When you value the person and not just the worker, you can transform the employee’s experience and impact their lives not just as staff but as people. Hotels found ways to reorganize employment to promote well-being and provide the business with long-term benefits. Building supportive workplaces that encourage employee health and well-being will always be a possibility.

Establishment of skeletal workforce. The growing impact of COVID-19 caused a global break in travel and tourism services, leading to a series of challenging HR issues in the industry. With the decline in business operations and revenue caused by the global pandemic, many establishments needed to reduce their workforce. As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads, more businesses are creating and implementing business continuity plans, but all employers must be effectively prepared. Many hotels have chosen the strategic response of reducing their staff in the event of a pandemic to maintain business operations and protect the health and safety of their workers.

**Coping mechanisms of the hotel employees on the challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The participants mentioned their ways of coping with the challenges they encountered during COVID-19 and elicited themes from the transcription made. Based on their responses, the following themes emerged: Adherence to Health Protocols and Exhibited Optimism, Ensuring Health Care, Receiving Charitable Assistance, and Drew motivation from Loved Ones to Keep Going. Table 3 shows the major themes and ideas on the coping strategies of hotel workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Table 3**  
Major themes and core ideas on How hotel workers overcome the challenges encountered while working during the pandemic

Adherence to Health Protocols	Committed to abide by hotel policies and regulations Observed rigorous health protocols to safeguard the well-being of both guests and staff Maintained a safe physical distance from guests at all times Collaborated with the Department of Tourism and Local Government Unit to enhance safety standards Utilized Personal Protective Equipment as standard safety measures Observed a high standard of hygiene and sanitation throughout the hotel facilities delivered food to guests while adhering to safety protocols
Exhibited Optimism	Showed faith and belief through prayers expressed trust in the expertise of health workers Embraced the challenges as learning opportunities Demonstrated determination and strong will to persevere Exhibited constant hope and resilience throughout the challenging time
Ensuring Health Care	Being proactive in drinking vitamins regularly Received free vaccines provided by the hotel Practiced self-care routines took ownership of health by utilizing natural remedies like ginger and garlic
Received Charitable Assistance	Benefitted from financial assistance and support from the government Received vitamins given by the health center Recognized the receipt of hazard fee by DOLE Provided with PPE supplies to ensure the safety of the hotel workers
Drew motivation from loved ones to keep going	Demonstrated familial love and responsibility Prioritized the needs of children and ensuring their well-being Developed a sense of connection by treating colleagues as family members

Adherence to Health Protocols. Aside from taking a toll on the public’s health and the economy, the

COVID-19 pandemic has greatly changed everybody's way of life. Understanding COVID-19, how it spreads, and how we can protect ourselves and others is an important first step in establishing processes and protocols. Compliance with quarantine rules is the best thing they can contribute to efforts in containing the pandemic. Following COVID-19 protocols is essential to help reduce the spread of the virus and protect yourself and others. Everyone understands that there is a need to follow health protocols. It is a human response to help save one's life and help save others.

**Exhibited Optimism.** An optimistic mindset is one that has trust in one's ability to succeed and is confident in the future. It is important to have a positive outlook because it can have such a significant impact on your mental and physical well-being even if you are experiencing challenges today. Despite hardships, we firmly believe that through prayers we can sail through these storms with God's help and our own efforts as well. Optimistic attitudes are linked to several benefits, including better coping skills, lower stress levels, better physical health, and higher persistence when pursuing goals. The attitude of optimism expresses the conviction that most outcomes of events or experiences will be helpful.

**Ensuring Health Care.** Preventive health care helps you maintain your health. There are ways to protect yourself and prevent the spread. Safe and healthy working conditions are fundamental for decent work and are the foundation upon which policy guidance for the return to work must be based. A lot of factors play a role in staying healthy. In turn, good health can decrease your risk of developing certain diseases or conditions. Keep in mind that maintaining personal hygiene during COVID-19 involves safeguarding not only oneself but also others, especially those who are vulnerable.

**Received Charitable Assistance.** COVID-19 has had the biggest impact on the country's most vulnerable groups. Most households experience a significant economic shock. However, assistance from the government, private groups, institutions, friends, and private individuals played a significant role in coping with the challenges experienced. The best forms of support are those that are non-discriminatory, transparent, time-limited, and transparent. In times of major outbreaks, prompt and effective government management is essential. Receiving any form of assistance is vital during a pandemic for several reasons, among which is that it is essential to mitigate the health, economic, and social effects of such crises. Government interventions that are timely and well-coordinated can lessen the effects of the epidemic and aid society in recovering and rebuilding more successfully.

**Drew Motivation from Loved ones to keep going.** Family love can be built with a group outside of your family, such as your friendship circle as well. Family is a powerful source of motivation to work. Families are prepared to make compromises for the happiness and well-being of one another. To meet the requirements of a family member could entail sacrificing personal preferences or resources. Amid the pandemic, the family still prevails as a reason to continue working. While the loss and challenges of the pandemic have been felt by everyone, the effect of COVID-19 and the resulting lock downs have been particularly impact ful on working parents. Many employees have families that rely on their income to cover essential expenses like housing, food, healthcare, and education. These financial responsibilities can motivate individuals to continue working, even in challenging circumstances, to ensure their family's well-being. Some employees are driven to continue working by a strong sense of duty and responsibility to their families, which can be a powerful motivator.

### **Insights the Participants Share about their Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Hotel workers faced numerous challenges and gained valuable insights into the impact of COVID-19 that affected the industry. These major themes and core ideas emerged from their experiences highlighting the following: Illustrating Personal Growth and Behavior Transformation, Embracing Positive Values, and Valuing support from government and Family.



Illustrating Personal Growth and Behavior Transformation. The pandemic has changed how people navigate daily life. People naturally engage in adaptive behavior to meet the demands of their situation or environment, exceptionally humans are fundamentally resilient. It is important to note that people choosing to change their behavior after COVID-19 will vary based on personal experiences, cultural norms, and individual circumstances.

Embracing Positive Values. Being optimistic about circumstances and interactions is a sign of having a positive attitude. Even in the most difficult situations, those with positive attitudes maintain optimism and perceive the best. One should have a never-give-up mentality and exercise discipline. Positive values are often seen as being vital to fostering pleasant interactions, strong communities, and a fair and peaceful society. People and organizations who put these principles first are more likely to make positive contributions to their own and others' well-being.

Valuing Family and Company Support. Amid a pandemic like COVID-19, when the world is unpredictable, the idea of appreciation is particularly crucial. Having an attitude of gratitude can also help you become more resilient, which can help you deal with challenges and find a way to go forward despite the obstacles you face. It is important to keep in mind that during a pandemic, people could experience high levels of fear and anxiety. Acts of gratitude and goodwill can build a sense of community and togetherness that can provide comfort and fortitude in difficult circumstances.

### **Discussion on the Experiences of the Hotel Employees during the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the hospitality industry, causing employees to face various challenges and concerns. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on hotel workers, affecting their mental health and job security. At the same time, the pandemic has also disrupted the interactions between hotel employees and guests, leading to anxiety for both parties. Hotel managers have enforced safety measures to improve health and safety. Hence, there was a redesign in the hospitality industry.

Transient Accommodation Schemes. The hotel and healthcare sectors have united in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic to work together to repurpose hotel spaces as alternate quarantine locations. General site preparations and hotel operations infrastructure must be completed before these properties may be converted.

In a study by Rocamora (2021), The Department of Tourism Philippines' Tourism Response and Recovery Plan (TRRP), which brings together multiple government agencies to support domestic tourism, was created in response to operational pressures on lodging and accommodations. Its main goals are business operations, policy and marketing development, and the implementation of health and safety protocols before, during, and after service delivery. The pandemic has posed a significant challenge to stranded individuals, necessitating a multifaceted approach involving national and local government agencies. According to a Social Weather Stations study, the coronavirus epidemic across the country caused community quarantines that left 3.5 million Filipinos of working age stranded in other locations (Phil Star, 2020). In addition, local government units (LGUs) were informed that they cannot refuse returnee OF Ws admission (CNN Philippines, 2020). Hotels typically rely heavily on business and leisure travel for their income, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic's travel restrictions, low-to-zero occupancy rates have been observed. This is because of efforts to reduce the rate of virus transmission in enclosed spaces. In the Philippines, at the height of the lock down, only businesses with valid Department of Tourism accreditation were permitted to operate under the ensuing guidelines (Aquino, J. A., et al, 2021) During this pandemic, the Philippine government has utilized the services of the hotels to act as extra quarantine facilities (Hao et al., 2020).

The Philippine hotel industry has demonstrated a strong commitment to helping the government prioritize public health and safety by repurposing hotel rooms as quarantine facilities for medical front-line workers, BPO employees, stranded local and foreign travelers, returning OFWs, and Filipino and foreign nationals (Philippine News Agency [PNA], 2021).

**Exigent Hospitality Services.** Businesses and organizations, including hotel and accommodation sectors had to swiftly adapt to continue providing services while adhering to safety regulations. Hotel employees had to quickly adapt to new safety protocols and guest expectations, emphasizing the resilience and flexibility of the hospitality industry. The pandemic has caused abrupt and unanticipated changes in work practices, generating uncertainty for employees, and negatively impacting their well-being (Kinsman et al., 2020).

**Financial Challenges Faced by Employees.** Hotel employees suffered from the pandemic's shortened hours, layoffs, and lack of job security, which highlighted the financial toll on the workers. The participants have experienced financial hardships, especially managing budgets. Moreover, many individuals experienced a reduced number of working hours leading to a significant drop in income. The situation created challenges in meeting the basic expenses. Financial difficulties include trouble paying bills, acquiring necessities such as food and clothing, and affording decent housing, utilities, health care, and transportation (Fran kham, C., Richardson, T., & Maguire, N. (2020). Individuals, on the other hand, cannot afford to stay at home without a job to survive; as a result, they are significantly more worried about their jobs with the COVID-19 epidemic (Duale, 2020).

**Travel Uncertainties and Restrictions.** Travel restrictions impacted not only the hotel's guests but also the staff who faced difficulties in commuting to work, showcasing the personal sacrifices made by employees. Hotel employees shared the difficulty because of travel restrictions and how they endured rain, hot weather, checkpoints, and the long distance they had to walk from and to the hotel whenever they went to work. Due to the Pandemic, public transit has been hit the hardest, as revealed by survey-based statistics (Molloy et al. 2020; Astroza et al. 2020).

In the Philippines, the community-wide restrictions had an enormous effect on the land transport industry, especially given that an estimated 2.4 million commuters now use public transportation (Ugay and others, 2020). Also, the sudden and strict shutdown measures led to the challenging drop as well by further discouraging commuters from using mass transit (Hassel wander et al., 2021). Moreover, due to distant working arrangements and the cancellation of many leisure activities, low use of transit has been and still is causing a decrease in transportation demand (Lima, Carvalho, and Figueiredo, 2020).

**Emotional Struggles due to COVID-19.** This major theme explored the emotional toll of the pandemic on hotel workers, including stress, anxiety, and burnout, and considered the importance of mental health support. Hotel employees experienced emotional challenges such as anxiety, stress, and fear of infection, shedding light on the toll that the pandemic took on their mental well-being. They have expressed how fearful they felt at first but had to overcome the challenges and difficulties they experienced. According to Selye (1973), "the bodily processes that result from circumstances that place physical or psychological demands on an individual" are what are traditionally referred to as "stress."

**Provision of Stopgap Support.** Supporting staff well-being is crucial for creating a healthy and productive work environment. The participants shared how hotel owners showed dedication to their employees' well-being by offering support and healthcare benefits. Employee well-being refers to how their general health and happiness are impacted by their jobs, expectations, stress levels, and work settings (Martic, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic caused a shift in the working environment which has left an impact on workers as well as employers (for example, remote work, stress, unemployment).

Establishment of Skeletal Workforce. Hotels during the pandemic operated with reduced staff. The management had to make significant adjustments because of the limited occupancy in the hotel operations. It is for that reason that many individuals lose their jobs because of the pandemic, which mostly impacts the tourism and hospitality sectors (Nicola et al., 2020; Hao et al., 2020). Businesses were compelled to concentrate on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic's effects right away as its effects on those organizations grew. These businesses dealt with the repercussions in a way that motivated them to keep working and fulfill their obligations (Gaike 2020).

### **Discussion on the Coping Mechanisms of the Hotel Workers on the Challenges encountered during the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Hotel workers coped with challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic through various mechanisms. They strictly adhered to health protocols like social distancing, wearing masks, and frequent sanitization to stay safe. Many exhibited optimism and drew motivation from loved ones to continue working despite difficulties. Their employers ensured health care benefits and access to medical facilities. Some also received charitable assistance from organizations and local communities which helped them financially.

Adherence to Health Protocols. Participants emphasized the importance of following stringent health protocols and safety measures to protect themselves and others from the virus. This theme highlights the significance of mask-wearing, social distancing, and hand hygiene as essential coping strategies during the pandemic.

Exhibited Optimism. Despite the numerous challenges posed by the pandemic, participants displayed a remarkable sense of optimism. This theme underscores the resilience and positive outlook that many individuals maintained throughout the crisis, which helped them navigate the uncertainty and anxiety associated with COVID-19. This finding coincides with the study of Seligman (2006), where he asserts that positive thinking, as a measure of optimism, has been proven to enhance life satisfaction.

Ensuring Health Care. The participants acknowledged the paramount importance of prioritizing their own health and well-being. This theme emphasizes the significance of self-care, both physical and mental, as a coping mechanism. Participants also emphasize taking proactive steps to maintain personal health and well-being. Moreover, they demonstrated a strict compliance in maintaining the cleanliness of their environment. Hence, Cleaning and sanitizing guest rooms and public spaces was advised by Chien and Law (2003) as part of post-recovery efforts. They proposed forming a task force to monitor the hotel's environmental hygiene as well as the personal health of employees and customers. A lot of people utilize coping mechanisms to deal with their difficult situations, such as redirecting their attention, keeping their optimism, and maintaining their own protection. This conclusion was in line with Cava et al.'s findings in 2005, that individuals used coping mechanisms throughout the quarantine procedure.

Received Charitable Assistance. Some participants mentioned receiving support from government agencies. This support could include financial aid or access to healthcare resources. This theme highlights the role of government assistance in helping individuals cope with the economic and healthcare challenges posed by the pandemic. Relative to less developed and underdeveloped rural communities, which have been hotspots for the COVID-19 pandemic, there are already adequate health facilities in metropolitan regions (OECD, 2022). According to the Social Weather Stations (SWS) recent study, seven in ten Filipino families claim to have gotten financial aid from the government since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Drew Motivation from Loved Ones to Keep Going. The participants in this study have expressed that it is because of their families and loved ones, why they continue to persevere. They drew strength and motivation from their relationships with loved ones. This theme underscores the importance of social

connections and emotional support networks in times of crisis. Family, friends, and community ties play a crucial role in helping individuals persevere through difficult times. On the other hand, most families accept the responsibility for the welfare of their family, encompassing emotional and financial support. In relation to that, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) emphasized the significance of fostering strong family ties and gaining access to psychosocial and mental health support. In the same manner, the National Committee on the Filipino Family (NCOFF) chair, DSWD, provided advice on how to help one's family throughout the epidemic. Moreover, according to Ignacio in 2010, the cultural roots of Filipino resiliency are a deep spirituality, strong familial relationships, and a positive outlook on life. Traditional support structures remain because it is the nature of our society.

### **Discussion on the Insights the Participants Share about their Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Hotel workers faced numerous challenges and gained valuable insights into the impact of COVID-19 that affected the industry. The participants discussed how the COVID-19 epidemic had affected their personal development and behavioral changes, how they valued support from friends and family and their employers, and how they had embraced good ideals. They gave examples of how the pandemic made them concentrate on bettering themselves, value the little things in life, and rely more on their social networks. Many reported feelings more empathetic, appreciative, and appreciative of their time spent with loved ones. People's support for one another during the crisis revealed the value of social relationships and community.

**Illustrating Personal Growth and Behavioral Transformation.** Hotel workers underwent significant personal growth and transformation during the pandemic. They adapted to new health and safety protocols, learned to navigate uncertainty, and developed resilience. This theme underscores the remarkable ability of individuals to evolve in response to adversity, both personally and professionally. Workers exhibited adaptability, resourcefulness, and a commitment to their roles, demonstrating the capacity for personal development even in the face of extreme challenges. The findings of the study showed similar results from the Pew Research Center in 2022. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak showed that many Americans (26%) said maintaining their health became more essential to them, whether this meant paying greater attention to a healthy lifestyle or complying with public health precautions. Participants also remarked it was now important to them to take security measures to safeguard their health. And many of those in this group stated that attending big events and having face-to-face interactions.

**Embracing Positive Values.** The pandemic highlighted the importance of positive values within the hotel industry. Workers prioritized safety, compassion, and community in their actions and interactions. The emphasis on these values not only ensured the well-being of guests and colleagues but also contributed to the industry's recovery. A study by Emmons in 2013 showed that it can be more challenging to be grateful for broken things, depressing situations, and bothersome or hurtful people. People have a sense of helplessness and a loss of control over their lives and their faith during times of disaster and uncertainty, such as a pandemic. It becomes challenging for individuals to take things for granted until they know that all they have and have depended upon could be taken away.

**Valuing Family and Company Support.** The help they received and numerous aspects of their job were acknowledged and appreciated by hotel employees. Even in trying situations, they appreciated the chance to serve visitors, and they expressed gratitude for their employers', coworkers', and clients' assistance. An article by Make Me Better done in 2020 states that the relationships we have with other people are among the most important things in life. Everyone needs at least one person with whom they have a close relationship, who supports them, and who they can count on. Some people just need their family, while others only want a love partner, and some might not require a wide circle of friends. Previous research has demonstrated how corporate sustainability measures by Obeitoh & Ekundayo in 2018 and employee care by Tomo & Todisco in 2018 enhance work performance. The pandemic has brought attention to the importance

of having a sense of community at work as well as the positive emotions brought on by the camaraderie and support of coworkers. Employees continue to perceive a loss of connection with their colleagues despite efforts to transition work partnerships and engagement activities within work teams during the pandemic (Teng-Calleja et al., 2020). Furthermore, according to a 2022 article by Jamie Birt, expressing gratitude at work can be beneficial since it helps people make close, enduring friendships, boost their self-esteem, and achieve their personal and professional goals.

**Implications for the Hospitality Industry.** Based on the study about the impact of COVID-19 on hotel workers, the implications may include, that there is an urgent need for reform in the hospitality industry to address the systemic issues that allowed exploitation of hotel workers to occur. This includes advocating for stronger labor protections, supporting unionization efforts, and holding unscrupulous hoteliers accountable. The pandemic exposed the vulnerability of hotel workers. Social support and problem-solving coping strategies are effective in mitigating the negative impacts of stress, depression, and anxiety among front-line hotel employees.

The research findings can help hotel management improve their working environment and protect employees from the risks of contracting COVID-19. This includes implementing better health and safety practices in the hotel sector to reduce stress or depression among employees caused by the fear of COVID-19. Employee safety is a priority for hotel management, particularly when converting hotels into medical facilities or other vital services. This entails outlining their responsibilities for traditional hospitality jobs and reaffirming their commitment to safeguarding staff. **Public perception:** To reduce the risks associated with the pandemic, hotels should emphasize the benefits of their community involvement and the steps they take to clean and disinfect their spaces before resuming regular business. **Assistance for vulnerable groups:** During the pandemic, there have been more hazards for hotel employees, especially those who work for first-generation hotel owners. The hospitality industry urgently needs to change. The implications of these experiences underscore the need for support, communication, and resilience-building programs to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on hotel workers' mental health and quality of life.

**Recommendations for Future Researchers.** This research paper assimilates the lived experiences of Hotel Workers on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic that may add to the body of knowledge and help people to deeply understand the situations of the employees in times of crisis. This paper was developed during the pandemic. The government and other industries occasionally launch new projects, which future Studies should take the post-pandemic state into account when conducting their analyses.

Future researchers can investigate the psychological impact of the pandemic on hotel workers. Explore topics such as stress, anxiety, burnout, and coping mechanisms. Consider using standardized psychological assessment tools to measure these variables. Identify and document the resilience and coping strategies employed by hotel workers during the pandemic. Hotel management should implement better health and safety practices to protect employees from COVID-19 risks, such as providing personal protective equipment and disinfecting surfaces. They should also create a secure working atmosphere to mitigate psychological distress and job dissatisfaction. Supporting remote work policies and addressing systemic issues is crucial. Hotel management should communicate their commitment to employee safety and showcase positive community service to mitigate public perception risks related to the pandemic. This can offer valuable lessons for both workers and employers on how to better prepare for and respond to future crises.

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